

## Georgia Department of Human Resources

# IMMUNIZATION IN GEORGIA

### The Facts

- Georgia law requires all children entering school or daycare to show proof of immunization. However, children should begin to receive vaccinations as infants so they can be protected during the preschool years as well.
- To prevent the occurrence and outbreaks of childhood vaccine-preventable diseases, it is necessary to maintain immunization levels of 90 percent or higher. Public health clinics in Georgia monitor immunization levels in both public clinics and in the population as a whole. In 2002, 91 percent of Georgia's two-year-olds who use public health clinics were adequately immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella. Public clinics serve less than 40 percent of Georgia's children. The National Immunization Survey of 19-35 month-old children in Georgia conducted by CDC from July 2001 through June 2002 revealed an 82.3 percent coverage level.
- By the age of two, a child should have received 4 doses of vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP/DTaP), one for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), 4 for *Haemophilus influenza B* (HIB), 3 for polio (IPV or OPV), 3 for hepatitis B (HBV), one dose of varicella or chickenpox, and 4 doses of pneumococcal conjugate (PCV).
- All children entering school or daycare must be age-appropriately immunized with all the required vaccines. This includes protection against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (if under 7 years of age), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, *Haemophilus influenzae*, type b (Hib disease) (if under 5 years of age), and varicella (chickenpox).
- In addition, children who are entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade are required to show 1) proof of protection against measles (2 doses given on or after the first birthday and at least 4 weeks apart or a positive serology) and 2) proof of protection against varicella or chickenpox (vaccination date/s, positive serology, or a health care provider's interpretation of a parent's description of disease history).
- People of all ages should have their immunization status reviewed on each visit to their health care provider and any vaccines that are currently routinely recommended should be administered if indicated.

### The Resources

- The Vaccines for Children Program (VFC), which began in October 1994, is coordinated by the Georgia Immunization Program. VFC provides free vaccines to private and public providers for children birth through 18 years of age who are Medicaid-enrolled, American Indian/Alaskan Native, the uninsured, and children whose vaccinations are not covered by insurance. As of December 2002, 243 public

health clinics in Georgia and over 2,050 private physicians at 1,009 locations participate.

- During 2002, public health clinics in Georgia's 159 counties administered 930,560 doses of vaccine and other providers, including hospitals and private physicians, administered 1,040,479 doses of vaccine supplied by the VFC program.
- Public Health's budget for vaccines included \$8.4 million in state funds in state FY 2003 and another \$28 million in federal immunization grant funds for calendar year 2002.
- Fees charged for immunizations vary, depending on ability to pay. For children who qualify for the Vaccines for Children program, private providers may charge an administration fee of up to \$14.81 per injection. Medicaid and PeachCare reimburse providers for vaccinations given to Medicaid and PeachCare recipients.
- To overcome barriers to vaccination, Georgia's public health departments remind parents when their children's vaccinations are due; offer extended clinic hours; give vaccinations on a walk-in basis; and distribute educational materials on immunization.
- People 50 years and older and anyone with chronic medical conditions should receive an annual influenza immunization. These are usually given during the fall months and are available at public health clinics. People 65 and older and anyone with a chronic medical condition should be vaccinated against pneumococcal pneumonia. For most people, this vaccine is given once in a lifetime, at any time of the year. Both influenza and pneumococcal vaccine costs can be reimbursed by Medicare Part B.
- The Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS) was piloted in four health districts in May 2003 and is scheduled to be extended statewide in September 2003. GRITS will help parents keep track of their children's immunizations even if they move or change doctors. Both public and private providers will be able to input and access a child's complete immunization record. This will decrease over- and under-immunizations, and give a better picture of the immunization status of all of Georgia's children.
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